

Questions for Democratic Expert Witnesses
From Harold Cook, 1/25

Below are the questions for our invited testimony - Gary Bledsoe (NAACP), Chase Bearden (Coalition for Texans with Disabilities), and Luis Figueroa (MALDEF). Dr. Andres Tijerina (TX History Professor) is giving more of a history lesson of minority disenfranchisement, so there are no questions advanced for Dr. Tijerina. Some may occur to members in the course of his testimony.

Keep in mind that since there is a time limit on invited testimony of 10 minutes, any leading questions asked by a Senator will extend our witnesses time.

Questions for Gary L. Bledsoe (Texas NAACP)

Q. Some say the Voting Rights Act is no longer needed is a thing of the past that is no longer needed in Texas. Can you cite examples or give reasons that show why we still need voting rights protections?

Q. Is there a well-documented history of voter suppression that is specifically related to race and ethnicity, and how would this Voter ID law fit into that history?

Q. How would this Voter ID law discriminate against people of color?

Q. If the Legislature exempts certain classes of voters, like seniors, from this bill, would that direct an even greater amount of its potential to disenfranchise voters at African Americans and Hispanics?

Q. Did you see the materials the Attorney General used in his highly publicized 2005-2006 campaign against "Voter Fraud"?

Q. In his anti-Voter Fraud campaign, the Attorney General used materials that included images of sickle cell stamps and photos of African Americans to illustrate signs of voter fraud – what does that tell you about the state's attitude and enforcement of voter fraud, and did the conduct and targets of Abbott's prosecutions fit into a pattern of vote suppression in Texas?

Q. Gary, you suggest a photo ID law would suppress African American turnout, but some Voter ID advocates claim Voter ID laws do not suppress turnout, and even claim turnout increases in Indiana and Georgia in 2008 were caused by Voter ID laws, compared to 2004 turnout when there was no photo ID law in those states. Obviously, turnout can vary a lot between election cycles based on enthusiasm, candidates, and other factors. Did African American turnout in Texas increase in 2008 without a Voter ID law, and do you think the reason might be the same as the real reason for reports of higher turnout in Indiana and Georgia?

Questions for Luis Figueroa, MALDEF

Q. Could you compare the legislation before us to the corresponding legislation passed in Indiana, Georgia, and Arizona?

Q. Could you go over any implementation issues or challenges of the voter ID law in Arizona, and how the law may have disenfranchised Latino voters?

Q. What do you believe the net impact of voter ID legislation on Latino voters is?

Q. Are Latino voters less likely to have the identification required by the bill? Why?

Q. Have Latino voters experienced a history of disenfranchisement in Texas? Might this longstanding history contribute to a distrust of the

electoral system, and thus contribute to lowering voter turnout among this ethnicity, even among those who might possess the required identification?

Questions for Chase Bearden (Coalition of Texans with Disabilities)

Q. Are people with disabilities less likely to have a current drivers license, military ID, or passport? If so, why?

Q. What additional barriers do people with disabilities have in obtaining the forms of ID requested by this bill?

Q. Would the voter identification required in this bill be sufficient to ensure access to accurate information about this new ID requirement information for the full range of people with disabilities in our state?

Q. What affect do you believe SB 14 would have on turnout of voters with disabilities?

Q. Could SB 14 negatively impact any voters who have a photo ID?

Q. What affect do you believe SB 14 would have on the number of provisional ballots cast by voters with disabilities? What barriers are in place that would make it difficult for people with disabilities to return to the election office to cure a provisional ballot?

Q. What are the most pressing issues reported by voters with disabilities? And, does SB 14 address any of these issues?

Q. Are there any issues affecting Texans with disabilities that would better utilize the funds required to implement SB 14?